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Musica Antiqua Praha releases hitherto unpublished recordings of baroque music



During the fifteen years of its existence between 1982 and 1997, the legendary vocal-instrumental ensemble **Musica Antiqua Praha** with its artistic director **Pavel Klikar** was recognized as one of the leading early-music ensembles in Europe. Animal Music now releases the ensemble's recently discovered world-premiere recordings of music retrieved from the archive of the Prague Order of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. The recordings are part of the last major recording project by the ensemble, undertaken in 1996 but unpublished to this day. The album features high-Baroque compositions that had been found in the archive of the church of St. Francis Seraph at the monastery of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star in Prague. The release of the album thus symbolically reconfirms the lasting legacy of this exceptional music ensemble that was an important seedbed of talent and brought forth a whole generation of early-music performers. Among the

musicians who collaborated with Musica Antiqua Praha were a number of foremost instrumentalists and world-renowned vocalists, including the soprano Magdalena Kožená.

The legacy of **Musica Antiqua Praha** is inextricably linked with the name of its founder and artistic director, **Pavel Klikar**, who also initiated the formation of another exceptional ensemble, the Original Prague Syncopated Orchestra, widely recognized for its authentic performance of early American jazz and dance music of the 1920s.

From the late 1980s, Musica Antiqua Praha was hailed as one of the top European ensembles specializing in historically-informed interpretation. It was often praised for its broad repertoire and conceptual programmes, specific performance style and astonishing spiritual intensity. The ensemble was a regular guest at many prestigious festivals abroad where its performances met with great acclaim from audiences and critics alike.

Pavel Klikar initiated many unheard-of innovations on the local music scene, including the use of authentic, renovated Baroque instruments or their copies, copies of Baroque bows, and the revival of period instrumental and vocal techniques, including unequal tuning temperaments. He collaborated with foremost instrument makers and oversaw the beginnings of the Czech production of copies of period harpsichords and portable organs. Throughout the 1990s he maintained a busy concert career and released five albums.

The album **Baroque Music in Prague** comprises composition by four authors from the turn of the 17th and 18th century that Pavel Klikar discovered in the archive of the Prague Order of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. The archive represents a rarely preserved and extensive collection of period music dating back 300 years. The transcriptions and parts were prepared by musicologist Tomáš Slavický. The recording took place in the former seminary church of St. John of Nepomuk in Hradec Králové in May 1996, in collaboration with the sound master Tomáš Štern. The author of the cover illustration is Stanislav Setinský. The album is released as part of the Animal Music 2023 Edition, supported by a grant from the City of Prague, and has also been supported by a kind donation from Ms. Ingeborg Radok Žádná. The publishing activities of Animal Music in 2023 are sponsored by the PPF Foundation and Prague Gas, Inc.

"These unique treasures from the archive of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star testify to the high quality of music production in Baroque Prague. The monastery most certainly paid for the services of some of the best musicians in the region, for the music composed by their contemporaries that has been stored in the Order's archive is often quite demanding and virtuosic. Our last recordings remained hidden for many years in the estate of the tragically deceased sound master Tomáš Štern. I am happy that despite the considerable delay, we are now

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able to present listeners with these exceptional, world-premiere recordings,” says the ensemble’s artistic director Pavel Klikar.

“To me, performing with Musica Antiqua Praha always felt like entering a different musical dimension. The sound of the instruments blended together so well and the performance style was really unique. While Pavel Klikar was the heart of the ensemble and a unifying element, each one of the players contributed significantly to the whole. It was a beautiful escape and a most pleasant musical adventure,” recalls Dagmar Valentová, a foremost Baroque violinist who has collaborated with many leading international early-music ensembles, including the BEMF Orchestra, Solamente naturali Bratislava, Festival Orchestra Göttingen, Les Talens Lyriques, Collegium 1704, Holland Baroque, Concerto Copenhagen, Musica Florea and others.

Similar memories are recounted by one of the core members of Musica Antiqua Praha, baroque cellist and viola player, and currently the rector of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, Ingeborg Radok Žádná: *“In the years before the political turnover in 1989, Musica Antiqua Praha represented a form of cultural opposition, and thanks to the visionary and masterful approach to music-making by Pavel Klikar it became a vanguard of all the local musicians and ensembles that started exploring historically informed performance after the revolution. Pavel Klikar surrounded himself with musicians who felt no need to assert themselves as soloists but were happy to be part of an ensemble. All those years spent making music together then bore their fruit on the concert stage where the ensemble often breathed as one organism and the performances were marked by a heightened sense of mutuality.”*

The album is released on **31 March 2023** on CD and digitally, and is distributed internationally by SUPRAPHON. It is available from the usual distribution outlets and global streaming platforms, as well as from the Animal Music e-shop (www.animalmusic.cz).

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